

DOCTRINAL AND CONTROVERSIAL.

"THE AGITATION OF THOUGHT IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM."

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Is the Soul Immortal?

BY JOSEPH BOWMAN.

It would seem very strange, indeed, to me if a man's soul is immortal that in all the seven hundred times the Hebrew word (*nephish*) occurs and from which the word soul is taken, and the one hundred and five times the Greek word *psueche* is found, the word immortal, never-dying is found nowhere in connection with these terms. But to the contrary we read that the soul dies, and if souls die, does it not clearly prove that souls are mortal? Hundreds of times it is applied to things that perish. Eccl. says, The soul that sinneth it shall die. David prayed to God that he would let his soul live. See Psalms 119:175. Do you think brother James, that David would pray God to keep a never-dying soul from dying? I think not. In Psalms 67:9 we read, "But those that seek my soul to destroy it shall go into the lower parts of the earth. I would think they were foolish to try to destroy an immortal soul. Psalms 56:13 "Thou hast delivered my soul from death." Do you think he delivered a never-dying soul from death?

David says in the 70th Psalm, "Thou hast brought up my soul from the grave." Does the immortal soul go into the grave? I have only quoted a few of the many texts that go to show the soul is mortal or dying. Now brother James you produce one that says the soul is immortal or never dying. I believe I will take the responsibility to say that it cannot be found because I read the whole Bible through searching after this subject, and I failed to find it. If you will quote the chapter and verse I will greatly thank you. You say that God made man but he had not yet a soul. You cannot prove that he had no soul. I believe he was a soul before God breathed the breath of life into him. Just as much of a soul as he was afterward. He was a lifeless soul before he had the breath of life into his nostrils, afterward he became a living soul. "God formed man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his (the man's) nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul." Or a living being or person. God did not breathe the soul into him, he was already a soul, but he breathed the breath of life into his nostrils and the man became the living soul. We read in Eccl. 12:7, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was and the spirit return to God who gave it." The word spirit here is a different Hebrew word from that of the soul.

But nearly all the advocates of the Immortal soul doctrine confound the two together. They are entirely different words, but if they were the same in these two passages it is not proof that the soul or spirit is conscious after death. I think it is plain that man returns to his mother dust and the spirit to God who gave it. It knew nothing before God gave it and I believe it will know nothing when it returns. I believe in this passage this spirit is the same spirit or breath of life that God breathed into his nostrils. I believe that none will deny that the breath of life came from God. Then when man dies it returns to God and remains there until the resurrection. He makes no distinction between the wicked and the righteous, the spirit (or breath of life) of both the wicked and the righteous returns to God. If this is that conscious immortal soul, the wicked have been up in heaven with God enjoying the blessings of heaven, some of them for a thousand years. Such an idea is absurd. I believe Adam knew nothing before God breathed the breath of life into him and also believe that he knew nothing as soon as the breath of life was taken away from him. I think I can establish this. God told Adam, In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. Hebrew—Dying, thou shalt die, that is, become a dying man that day. God said, Thou shalt die. You may say that it was the body that was to die, but the conscious part the soul lived on. In reply to this I will ask, was God talking or addressing the body or the conscious part of man? I think he

was for he said thou, the very part he was talking to, shalt surely die. I believe the brain constitutes the mind and as soon as that ceases to act the man knows nothing. I am not yet ready to believe that if you kill a sheep it knows nothing but if you kill man he knows everything. I have heard of persons who have received blows on their head or other parts of their body so that they knew nothing; but according to the immortal soul doctrine had he received a little harder blow he would have known everything. If God told the truth when he said, Thou shalt surely die, I think it is as plain as noon-day that after a man dies he knows nothing. Eccl. 9:5, we read, The living know that they shall die, but the dead know not anything. Now, brother James, I ask you how you are going to get around this plain statement without any tinkering?

The way I think it ought to read to harmonize with the immortal soul doctrine is something like this: The never dying soul knows—because it is the conscious part—that the living body shall die, but the dead body knows not anything. Pardon me brother James if I am too plain, but I want to show you how I look at it. In the 10th verse same chapter, we read: "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge in the grave where thou goest. David says in the 115th Psalm, 17th verse, "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence." Do you think he had reference to the dead bodies when he said this, and their souls are still conscious? If the soul is the conscious part, and that is independent from the body, then the living body knew nothing and he could have said with as much propriety, The living know not anything. I am willing to base my arguments on plain literal passages of Scripture in preference to parables and figurative expressions which are very hard to understand.

In the 105th Psalm we read, "Thou hidest their face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die and return to their dust. If the soul is conscious after death, David, a man after God's own heart said, "I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness." That will be at the resurrection. According to your theory David's soul has been in heaven for a thousand years, and dissatisfied; because he will not be satisfied until the resurrection. In 6th Psalm we read, "Return, O, Lord, deliver my soul. O save me for thy mercies sake. For in death there is no remembrance of thee." If your theory is correct I think he would have rejoiced because his soul would soon go to God, and there he could enjoy all the blessings of heaven. Please read the 14th of Job, I will quote the 17th and 21st verses. "Oh that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, that thou wouldst keep me secret till thy wrath is past, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time and remember me." If a vain soul goes on to heaven, and he enjoys all the heavenly blessings, it seems rather strange to me that he was so much concerned about that set time that he wanted God to remember him. And again in the same chapter, "Thou changest his countenance and sendest him away. His sons come to honor and he knoweth it not and they are brought low but he perceiveth it not of them." Ministers in this enlightend world seem to be wise above that which was written and say they go on off to heaven and watch over their children and try to get them to do right. But poor old unfortunate Job did not live in this enlightened theological age. He says that after man is dead his sons come to honor and he knoweth it not. Our theologians say they do know that their sons come to honor. Which is right, the theologians or Job? I have only quoted a very few of the hundreds of passages of Scripture that plainly show that man is mortal and that he knows nothing after he is dead. When I searched the Scriptures in search of this subject I was wonderfully surprised to find so many plain texts that prove that man knows nothing between death and the resurrection. Now brother James should I deny all these plain literal texts that I have quoted, and hundreds that I have yet to quote, if it is necessary. I say should I deny all these plain texts of Scripture, and in preference to them take for my guide a few parables and figurative expressions which will greatly puzzle you or any theologian to harmonize.

You quote Rev. 6:9, "And they opened the fifth seal and I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain and they cried with a loud voice, etc." What conclusions can we get from this passage. They must have been confined in some place. They were shut up under the altar, a place that might not be desirable in heaven. If this is not a symbol but a literal expression God's people must make a change for the worse instead of better after they are dead. When they stoned Stephen to death he said Lord forgive them for they know not what they do. Solomon says speaking of the dead, Their love, their hatred, and their envy is now perished. But after all that Solomon said here are the souls of the holy masters smarting with resentment against their persecutors, crying for vengeance upon those wicked men. When they died they asked God to forgive them, but after they got to heaven, they found they were forgiven and began to cry for vengeance instead of forgiveness. Do you really think this is consistent? They asking God to put them in the eternal lake of fire in the presence of them or in view of the heavenly host. According to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus they can talk together. The screams and the cries of the wicked the weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, the torment so great that it is awful to think about, and those souls plead with God and try to hasten that pleasant time when they can behold them weeping and wailing throughout eternity. I ask you do you find such principles in the hearts of any good Christians? No. They all have a quiet, meek, and forgiving disposition. A great writer says, "These souls pray that their blood may be avenged—an article which the uncompounded, invisible and immaterial soul, as generally understood is not supposed to possess."

These are some of the difficulties that I come in contact with in accepting the popular theory. Oh, how strange it is that men will try to spiritualize plain positive statements and symbols and try to make them literal. The blood of Abel is said to have cried to God from the ground. Gen. 4, 9:10. "The stone cried out of the wall, and the beam out the timbers answered it." Heb. 2:11. "The hire of the laborers kept back by fraud cried and they entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." James 5:4. So I believe these souls could cry and be no more conscious than Abel's blood, the stone, the beam or the laborer's hire. Albert Barnes says, "We are not to suppose that this literally occurred, and that John actually saw the souls of the martyrs beneath the altar, for the whole representation is symbolical, nor are we supposed to believe that the injured and wronged in heaven actually pray for revenge on those who wronged them, etc."

John saw the souls of those that were slain. This is proof that he had reference to the whole person. What did they slay, could they slay immortal souls? John says the souls were slain. The same Greek word in many places is applied to the whole person and that is surely the meaning in this passage. If I would tell you that I saw a whole army of immortal souls slain you would say I was a fanatic. Yet according to your view you can make nothing else out of it. I believe they cried or their blood cried as Abel's blood cried from the ground. The Emphatic Diaglot, one of our best translations says, "I saw under the altar the persons of those having been killed, etc." I think you have mind enough to see that it was the souls that were slain or killed instead of their bodies. If the soul is immortal how can it be killed? Please explain.

You say the souls in the 20th chapter of Rev. were beheaded. You use your own sword to cut your head off. You use this to prove that souls are immortal and all immortal soul advocates that I have ever had any conversation with say, the immortal soul cannot be cut with knives, or chopped, or sawed, or divided in any shape or form, and here you quote a passage that says the souls heads were cut off. These souls were cut in two and the souls had heads, and if they had heads I would suppose they had bodies. Now brother James, if these immortal souls had their heads cut off, when will they be put together again, or will the soul remain throughout eternity divided?

(Concluded next week.)